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Useful Books on Pastoral Psychology

BY THE REV. J. VIPOND, B.D.

I

EVERY pastor learns psychology in time even if he never opens a book on the subject, but it is a painful process. He leaves his training college, his mind awl with biblical criticism, systematic theology, church history and moral philosophy but with little experience of people, with their frustrations, repressions and anxieties. How is he to begin that most solemn and sacred part of his ministry—"the cure of souls"? If he is fortunate, he may have a vicar who by faithful service and devotion to his people has gained a deep understanding of human nature, who will guide his first faltering steps and tactfully cover his blunders. To those without this privilege may I recommend Dr. Herbert Gray's little book, *About People*. In it are the lessons of a lifetime's experience and it will save the beginner many a blunder and needless pain. From a reading of it one gains not only a better insight but also reverence for human nature.

Without doubt this book will whet the appetite for more. I have never met Dr. J. R. Oliver, but his book on *Psychiatry and Mental Health* convinces me that the author is a man worthy to stand alongside Dr. Gray. He gives us of his ripe experience and is able to bring to bear on moral problems both the viewpoint of a priest and that of a medical practitioner. There is much seasoned advice for the problems of youth and the whole tone of the book is of sanctified commonsense. There is a predisposition to Roman Catholicism in his writings, but that cannot be a sufficient excuse for neglecting such a wealth of practical psychology.

There is abundance of little books on pastoral psychology traversing the same ground and varying a good deal in helpfulness. The glimpse of pastoral possibilities should not lead to an avid devouring of everything with the title "Psychology and . . .". Before embarking on the venture of pastoral psychology it is better to gain one's bearings in general psychology. It would be an excellent idea to begin with *William James*, who has been skilfully edited by Margaret Knight in the Pelican Series. Here is a truly great man. His work may be described as a bridge from the Old to the New Psychology. Many of his original insights have been proved right, and taken up for development by more recent psychologists. His exposition of the principles of psychology is a marvel of lucidity, and his description of "The Varieties of Religious Experience" has become a classic. This is a book I would not care to exchange for any other at twice the price.

Another book of similar calibre is Bernard Hart's *Psychology of Insanity*. Do not be put off by its grim title, for this is a most interesting account of the development of the New Psychology, and a most enlightening explanation of irrational behaviour. If it be true that insanity is but the grotesque exaggeration of traits to be found in

normal people, then here is a most useful magnifying glass to possess. Some idea of the value of the book may be gauged from the fact that it has run through four editions and thirteen reprints. The last edition was in 1930, and so, for those who would bring their knowledge abreast of recent developments, I might mention *Psychiatry To-day* (1952) by David Stafford Clark, published in the Pelican Series. In the latter book it is noticeable that medical psychology has moved away from the materialism of Freud, and that the author is of the opinion that "There is nothing about a belief in psychiatry which makes impossible a belief in God . . . nor has he any right whatever to pretend that anything he knows casts reasonable doubt upon such Divinity".

II

Coming to works dealing more specifically with the application of psychology to pastoral work, I would like to select for special mention two books both bearing the same title—*Pastoral Psychology*, but approaching it from different angles. The first is by William Goulooze who, as is apparent both from the title page and from the contents, is first and foremost a pastor. The standpoint is definitely Evangelical and Scriptural, but there is also a painstaking attempt to borrow the techniques of psychology for spiritual work. After a historical survey of pastoral theology, the author tries to discover by the questionnaire method how far pastoral theology needs implementing by psychology. There are some fine chapters on ministering to those who are sick, suffering or sad; and a most helpful chapter on the application of psychology to Christian living. The art of counselling, which is so widely used in America and so little known in Great Britain, is also described. A chapter is devoted to relations between the minister and the doctor, and the last chapter is surely right in laying emphasis on the spiritual qualifications needed for pastoral psychology. This is a most thorough book, fully documented and generously indexed. Although it was originally written as a thesis for a Doctorate it is essentially a working tool which should lie close to the hand of every pastor who desires to increase his efficiency in the cure of souls.

The second book of the same title is that by Göte Bergsten. Here is a different approach. Although the author believes that a sound knowledge of psychology is an indispensable part of a spiritual counsellor's equipment, yet he is less concerned to borrow psychotherapeutic principles than to show that pastoral psychology must develop its own technique. He sees the cure of souls as an essentially religious task. There is a good section on Confession. Although he disagrees with the Roman Catholic Confessional because of its legalism, yet he believes that a Protestant Confessional would be of incontestable value. He, like Fosdike, regards it as "an amazing welfare service for treating diseased souls". Religious abnormalities are described and much helpful advice is given on dealing with morbid guilt, religiosity, compulsions and religious depression. The final section of the book deals with the psychology of conversion and growth in grace. A most inspiring conclusion shows man raised by "a strength outside himself completing what psychological help and spiritual treatment has prepared".

Much of the work of a pastor lies in helping individuals. Reverent services and good preaching are of course essential ; but the criterion of a good pastor is in his ability to give spiritual help to the one who by the stress of life or the conviction of sin has been brought to a religious crisis. *The Individual and His Religion*, by Prof. Gordon Allport, will help us to understand some of the problems and difficulties which beset the individual on his journey to spiritual maturity. Dr. Allport, who is a Professor of Psychology at Harvard University, has a broad and sound understanding of the place of religion in human life. He traces the development of religion in the individual from its origins, through its expression in youth, and on to maturity. Problems of conscience, and the nature of doubt are dealt with most helpfully, and his conclusions are not only in line with much of the advanced thinking in modern psychotherapy, but most helpful and practical for the pastor who is called upon to help others along the road to spiritual maturity.

Unfortunately, as every minister is aware, some fall by the wayside into the Slough of Neurosis. It is pathetically patent of some Christians that their faith has not reached sufficient maturity to give them that peace which passeth all understanding. Care-lined faces, nervous mannerisms and tics are symptoms of not possessing what is preached. The neurotics and chronic worriers make big demands on a pastor's time, yet if he is really to help the confidant, instead of *feeding* the neurosis, he must possess something more than sympathy. Dr. J. G. McKenzie has done us a real service in making available his experience, and in studying the effect of various types of religion on mental health. *Nervous Disorders and Religion* contains the advice given in the form of lectures to a School of Theology. Here is no psychological substitute for Christianity, but the convictions of a man who has plunged deep enough to see that the needs of the personality, and peace of soul, can be secured only at the price of a pact with the cosmos : " a real love response to God, is the best preventive of neurosis ; and the one real guarantee of its cure ".

By now Dr. Weatherhead's splendid book on *Psychology, Religion and Healing* has received such wide publicity that I hesitate to review it again. Yet it is too important to be by-passed. As its title implies, it is a careful study of psychology and religion in relation to health. Beginning with man's earliest search for health, it goes on to examine our Lord's miracles of healing. By way of contrast there is a description of so-called 'religious healers' to-day. After exposing cranks, and warning against the dangers which follow from unspiritual methods, the author describes the work of the various guilds of health, about which he concludes—" The spiritual world has immense therapeutic energies which are scarcely tapped . . ." He demonstrates that unspiritual attitudes such as jealousy, pride and resentment can be the cause of illness, and that religion has a very relevant part to play in the cause of health. Apart from its great contribution to the work of spiritual healing, there is much matter of interest to the pastor which comes out incidentally as Weatherhead develops his thesis. He is gifted with a delightful style, and a knack of making difficult things understandable : his chapter describing the main schools of

psychology is a masterpiece. It is an expensive book, but I venture to predict that the man who borrows it will afterwards cheerfully pay twenty-five shillings to possess it.

III

Sooner or later the pastor will find himself doing the work of a marriage guidance counsellor. As sexuality is one of the important expressions of personal relationships, the minister who has not made a study of it will find that he labours under a severe handicap. The physiology of sex it may not be within his province to teach—the psychology of it he cannot avoid. His efficiency as a minister would be vastly improved by a study of both. The Pelican series have two companion books on this—*The Physiology of Sex* by Kenneth Walker, and the *Psychology of Sex*, written by Oswald Schwarz. Both are worthy of careful attention though the latter is perhaps more relevant to this review. There are chapters on the development of sexuality in the child. Various perversions are elucidated, the author taking the view that many of them are stages on the way to maturity. He categorises morality as “religious”, “conventional”, and “essential”, his own view being that “nothing that is truly natural can be really immoral”. Possibly some will differ from his approach to ethics, but none would fail to find real help in his psychology. Covering the same ground from the more specifically Christian viewpoint is Dr. Weatherhead’s earlier book *The Mastery of Sex through Psychology and Religion*. A smaller book which could be read with profit and also recommended to engaged couples is Dr. Gray’s *Men, Women and God*. Here is a truly Christian ideal of Courtship and Marriage.

Finally, I would like to draw attention to an important book published just before the war and issued in a second edition as soon as the noise of battle had died down—*An Introduction to a Christian Psychotherapy*, by J. A. C. Murray. It deals with another form of war, as he says in his preface: “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities and powers which in the mind impel that flesh and blood to strange and warlike things”. His book is an attempt to bridge the gap between the great structure of Christian doctrine and the epoch-making discoveries of recent psychological research, and “to mediate this new knowledge to the drifting and overstrained”. As the author points out, this is hardly included in ministerial training, and is where some theological colleges miss the mark. Psychology tends to be a Cinderella subject in the curriculum with the result that the ordinand emerges from his training ill-equipped to meet the cry of human need. It is the author’s thesis that a secular psychology is insufficient, and that a Christian psychotherapy, consisting of a synthesis of psychology and theology, is needed for the cure of souls. He devotes a couple of chapters to the structure of the human mind in the light of recent research, and attempts to complete the picture by reference to inspirational and mystical contact with another world of spiritual experience. The instincts are discussed with special reference to the sex instinct and Christ’s teaching thereon, and he regards the religious instinct as axiomatic to a Christian psychology. He then describes neurosis as a flight from reality, from the

reality of God. He gives a review of psychological methods of healing, but points out that medical psychotherapy has as many failures as successes. This raises the question as to how many of these failures "split on the sunken rock of religion". It is here, he maintains, that Christian psychotherapy has its opportunity, "a therapy which starts from the fact that behind it is the healing power of Christ . . . which never loses sight of its purpose of leading a man's soul nearer God . . . to touch his maladjusted life to the finer issues of loving his neighbour and loving his God . . .".

Altogether it is a fine book and should not only find a place in the library of every Theological College but should find a prominent place in the course of Pastoralia. The ordained man with some experience of 'lives disordered and souls inhibited' will readily perceive its value, and those who pursue the course of reading outlined in this review will find that Murray will help them to sort out their varied impressions and mass of information into a well-planned and orderly system.

BOOKS MENTIONED ABOVE :

- About People*, by Dr. Herbert Gray (S.C.M. Press, 3/6).
Psychiatry and Mental Health, by Dr. J. R. Oliver (Scribner, 12/6).
William James, edited by Margaret Knight (Penguin Books, 1/6).
Psychology of Insanity, by Bernard Hart (Cambridge U.P., 6/-).
Psychiatry To-day, by David Stafford Clark (Penguin Books, 2/6).
Pastoral Psychology, by Wm. Goulooze (Baker).
Pastoral Psychology, by Göte Bergsten (Allen & Unwin, 15/-).
The Individual and His Religion, by Gordon W. Allport (Constable, 12/6).
Nervous Disorders and Religion, by J. G. McKenzie (Allen & Unwin, 9/6).
Psychology, Religion and Healing, by L. D. Weatherhead (Hodder & Stoughton, 25/-).
The Psychology of Sex, by Oswald Schwarz (Penguin Books, 1/6).
The Mastery of Sex Through Psychology and Religion, by L. D. Weatherhead (S.C.M. Press, 7/6).
Men, Women and God, by A. Herbert Gray (S.C.M. Press, 4/6).
An Introduction to a Christian Psychotherapy, by J. A. C. Murray (T. & T. Clark, 12/6).

Pastor-Psychologist

The Value of Psychology in the Pastoral Office

BY THE REV. R. H. VOKES

THERE is a growing and welcome acceptance to-day of the idea of the parson-psychologist. Yet it is only a few years ago that the medical world cold-shouldered the clergyman without medical qualification who tried to enter the psychological field; nor was he more sympathetically received by many of his own colleagues in the ministry. The former looked upon him as a quack and a charlatan, whilst the latter would often accuse him of being side-tracked from the real work of the ministry, and even of preaching "another gospel".

Let it be admitted that neither criticism was always and altogether without justification. Medical psychologists had every reason to